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ABSTRACT

The numbers of students receiving a high school diploma in New Jersey and differences in graduation rates for males and females and for minority and non-minority students are examined. Conclusions are based on graduation totals reported by the school districts. In the country as a whole, 71% of all students receive a high school diploma by age 18 years. A review of data from 15 of the largest school districts in New Jersey (almost 20% of the state's public school enrollment) indicates that only 65.9% of males have completed high school when aged 18 to 19 years, in contrast to 77.1% of females in the same age group. The gender tilt in graduation totals exists almost exclusively in the five large urban districts. These schools are characterized by a high ratio of minority enrollment. A study of 5 of the 15 districts targeted shows a dramatic drop in school continuation from grade 7 to grade 12. Specific recommendations centering around better data collection are made to make more information about dropouts available. Better evaluation programs and mentoring programs for students are included among the recommendations for New Jersey schools. Four tables present study data. (SLD)

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New Jersey's Urban Graduates: Race/Ethnicity and Gender Issues

"Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour,
Rains from the sky a meteoric shower
Of facts. . . they lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill
Is daily spun; but there exists no loom
To weave it into fabric. . .

—Edna St. Vincent Millay

In 1900, only 6% of the nation's young people graduated from high school, but no one really seemed to care. By 1940, the national rate for completion of high school had jumped to 50%. Now, the rate hovers around 71% (but only 50% for most large urban areas), and more and more government officials, business leaders, and citizens are starting to worry.

The concern is ligitimate, even if the high school completion rate is near an all-time high, because young people today who do not graduate from high school face a future in which unemployment and low wages are a near certainty. In 1900, a dropout could find a job and lead a successful, productive life. In 1940, a dropout was needed in the army or in a factory. In the present competitive economic system with a highly technical job market, dropouts are often a financial drain to society, the most likely citizens to become dependent on welfare and other social services or to become involved in the corrections system. A high school diploma is a bare minimum preparation for the world of work in 1991.

Graduates in Urban New Jersey

As part of a series of reports on dropout related issues, the Research Institute decided to examine how many students are receiving a high school diploma from New Jersey urban school districts. Is there a difference in graduation rates for males and females? How are minority students faring in the quest for the crucial diploma?

A previous Research Institute report (available on request) examined the quality of official New Jersey dropout data and found the statistics totally inadequate. The present report takes a different approach, basing observations on graduation totals reported by the school districts, which, for comparison purposes, are known to be more reliable than the dropout data generated by various New Jersey education agencies. These graduation totals serve as an indicator of completion rates of school age youth. However, they are not an absolutely precise indicator, as it should be recognized that students and their families are mobile and that graduation data for public school districts are actually low estimates of the number of students who ultimately receive a diploma. Students who drop out of school and later return to an adult high school or a General Education Development (GED) program are not included in the school district graduation totals.

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TABLE 1

Urban District Data Summary

County	District	1984-85 Total Enrollment (Reported on Sept. 30, 1984)	1989-90 Total Enrollment (Reported on Sept. 30, 1989)	1989-90 Race/Ethnicity White	Black	Hispanic	1989-90 Minority Total*	7th Grade Enrollment 1984-85	1990 Graduates	% Survival to Graduation 1984-1990
Atlantic	Atlantic City	6,626	6,320	12.7**	65.7	18.7	87.3	532	315	**
Camden	Camden	18,851	18,999	4.2	59.3	35.3	95.8	1,432	513	36
Cumberland	Vineland	9,540	8,853	46.5	17.0	36.2	53.5	706	539	76
Essex	East Orange	12,141	11,358	0.2	96.9	2.6	99.8	968	453	47
	Irvington	9,196	8,324	3.7	81.2	13.7	96.3	769	350	46
	Newark	54,768	48,573	9.8	63.8	25.6	90.2	4,087	1,915	47
Hudson	Jersey City	31,018	27,788	12.6	43.9	34.4	87.4	2,331	1,104	47
	Union City	7,555	7,571	8.4	1.1	88.7	91.6	571	430	75
	West New York	5,493	5,149	10.2	0.8	86.0	89.8	384	366	95
Mercer	Trenton	14,085	12,351	9.7	71.3	18.4	90.3	1,184	405	34
Middlesex	Perth Amboy	5,718	5,994	10.2	10.9	78.4	89.8	386	292	76
Passaic	Passaic	8,892	8,405	7.3	21.7	63.4	92.7	701	382	55
	Paterson	24,278	21,671	9.8	44.5	44.3	90.2	2,043	719	35
Union	Elizabeth	15,046	14,955	22.1	31.2	44.3	77.9	1,079	778	72
	Plainfield	7,485	6,563	2.1	82.2	14.6	97.9	535	273	51

* Most of these districts also have small percentages of other ethnic groups, such as American Indian/Alaskan Native or Asian/Pacific Islander, which are included in this total. 9.1% of Jersey City's enrollment and 7.6% of Passaic's enrollment were Asian/Pacific Islander.

** The high school in this district also serves some smaller communities in the area. The percentage enrollment of white students in the high school is 34%.

Source: New Jersey Department of Education "New Jersey Public School Racial/Ethnic Enrollment Report," September 30, 1984, September 30, 1989, and New Jersey Department of Education "New Jersey Public School Followup Report," June, 1990.

Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics publications **The Condition of Education 1990** and **Dropout Rates in the United States: 1988** help place graduation totals in national perspective. In this country, 71% of all students receive a high school diploma by age 18 (74.0% of the whites, 58.4% of the blacks, and 52.4% of the Hispanics), but, by age 25 to 29, 86.3% of the whites, 83.3% of the blacks, and 59.9% of the Hispanics have completed high school or an equivalent, such as a GED. Basically, this means that about half of the white and black students across the nation who have not graduated by age 18 either complete school later than their age cohort or return to some type of program to receive a diploma by the time they reach their late twenties. Unfortunately, this pattern does not apply to Hispanic dropouts, who have a lower rate of school completion, however defined.

Fifteen of the largest urban school districts in New Jersey were selected for Research Institute review (Table 1) on the basis of student enrollment and racial/ethnic classifications. The urban districts selected constitute 19.8% of the total state public school enrollment and produce 12.5% of the Garden State's graduates. The minority enrollment in these 15 districts averages 89%. One of these urban districts, East Orange, has the highest ratio of minority enrollment of any K-12 district in the state at 99.8%.

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Gender and Graduates

New Jersey urban areas follow the disheartening national trend of low percentages of males graduating from high school. According to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, for October, 1988, nationally, only 65.9% of 18 to 19 year old males have completed high school, in contrast to 77.1% of females in the same age group.

In New Jersey, the gender graduation factor exists almost exclusively in the 15 urban districts, where only 46.6% of the graduates are male, even though each district had a higher total enrollment of males than females. This enrollment trend is not new; over the past twelve years, male enrollment in these 15 districts consistently has been higher than female, except for, at times, in the East Orange district. Statewide, there are more males than females enrolled in the public schools. If these 15 urban districts are removed

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TABLE 2

Annual Average Number of Graduates, Selected Districts: 1987-1990

County	District	High School	Male	% of Total	Female	% of Total
Atlantic	Atlantic City	Atlantic City	148	45.7	176	54.3
Camden	Camden	Camden	147	45.5	176	54.5
		Woodrow Wilson	90	42.5	122	57.5
Cumberland	Vineland	Vineland	294	48.5	312	51.5
Essex	East Orange	Clifford Scott	91	41.2	129	58.8
		East Orange	115	41.3	163	58.7
	Irvington	Frank Morrell	160	43.1	211	56.9
	Newark	Arts	49	40.7	71	59.3
		Barringer	149	44.4	187	55.6
		Central	62	40.4	92	59.6
		East Side	207	47.1	232	52.9
		Malcolm X Shabazz	78	39.0	121	61.0
		Science	37	38.0	60	62.0
		University	19	29.7	45	70.3*
		Weequahic	94	42.2	128	57.8
		West Side	87	41.5	123	58.5
Hudson	Jersey City	Academic	31	38.1	50	61.9
		Dickinson	177	48.4	189	51.6
		Ferris	122	49.6	124	50.4
		Lincoln	55	34.2	105	65.8
		Henry Snyder	95	47.9	103	52.1
	Union City	Emerson	122	49.2	126	50.8
		Union Hill	101	47.5	112	52.5
	West New York	West New York	170	51.4	161	48.6
Mercer	Trenton	Central	196	46.1	229	53.9
Middlesex	Perth Amboy	Perth Amboy	136	47.3	151	52.7
Passaic	Passaic	Passaic	207	47.3	230	52.7
	Paterson	Eastside	175	45.1	214	54.9
		John F. Kennedy	150	44.0	190	56.0
Union	Elizabeth	Elizabeth	368	45.6	440	54.4
	Plainfield	Plainfield	137	44.9	168	55.1

* Average of 3 years. 1990 totals not included in average due to change in reporting method.

Source: *New Jersey Department of Education, "New Jersey Public Schools Followup Report," June, 1987; June, 1988; June, 1989; and June, 1990. Calculations by Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey.*

from the statewide totals, 50.3% of the graduates in the rest of the state are males.

As Table 2 shows, a considerable percentage of the high school boys in the 15 districts have disappeared from the student rolls before reaching graduation. A four year average of the total number of girls and boys graduating was used in Table 2 to present a more complete picture for comparison purposes. West New York is the only district among the 15 whose percentage of male graduates reflects the percentage of males enrolled. The percentages of male and female graduates in Union City's Emerson High School and Jersey City's Ferris High School are almost equal, but, for example, in Clifford Scott High School in East Orange, Malcolm X Shabazz High School in Newark, and Lincoln High School in Jersey City, boys are in the minority when diplomas are awarded. The enrollment of boys drops precipitously by the junior year in these schools.

The seriousness of the gender tilt in graduation totals is reflected even in the most respected high schools in these urban areas. Of special note is the number of males graduating from the three Newark magnet high schools (Arts, Science, and University), and Academic High School in Jersey City. The number of boys applying and accepted to these schools is low, consequently the percentage of males graduating is low. Why fewer male students attempt to pursue a more rigorous academic program in these two districts is worthy of greater attention.

Other mid-sized urban districts on the East Coast with comparable size school populations (Table 3) to the 15 New Jersey urban districts seem to have similar problems keeping students, especially males, through graduation. These districts have low percentages of graduates in relationship to total district enrollment, and the number of males graduating from high school is considerably less than the number of females. Percentages of minorities vary in these comparison

TABLE 3

Graduates from Urban Districts in Nearby States

Year	District	Total Enrollment	% Minority	No. Graduates Male	No. Graduates Female
1988-89	York, PA	6,670	48.5	125	152
1988-89	Chester/Upland, PA	7,149	89.5	121	147
1988-89	Harrisburg, PA	9,002	84.8	178	199
1987-88	Springfield, MA	23,355	57.2	445	458
1987-88	New Bedford, MA	14,418	21.9	232*	345*
1988-89	Bridgeport, CT	19,270	85.1	274	356
1988-89	Hartford, CT	24,404	91.3	344	486
1988-89	New Haven, CT	16,862	82.2	267	376
1988-89	Albany, NY	7,788	51.3	159	212
1988-89	Buffalo, NY	44,409	58.2	1,121	1,185
1988-89	Rochester, NY	31,395	70.7	517	601

* Class of 1990.

Source: Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey survey.

districts, suggesting that multiple factors may be associated with the declining graduation rates for males in urban settings, not just ethnicity.

Racial/Ethnic Data for New Jersey Graduates

A major characteristic of New Jersey urban school districts is a high ratio of minority enrollment. Across the country, few school districts with enrollments of under 50,000 have comparable percentages of minority students. Exactly how racial/ethnic heritage, in contrast to socioeconomic status, relates to the graduation rates of students in New Jersey districts is open to question, since the longitudinal information needed for conclusive analysis is simply not available. The absence of data is unfortunate, as family, neighborhood, and economic factors may be significant influences on whether a student drops out or completes school. The number of graduates from each of these 15 urban districts is known, but how that relates to the number of students from each racial/ethnic group who could have graduated is more speculative. From the exhaustive studies completed by Dr. Philip Burch at Rutgers University's Bureau of Government Research on the number of graduates from urban high schools compared to the 9th grade enrollment in these schools four years earlier, results show that, in some districts, over 50% of the students do not graduate, and the percentage of male graduates of each racial/ethnic group lags behind the females.

Writing in the Summer, 1987, issue of **The Urban League Review**, Dr. Antoine M. Garibaldi of Xavier University of Louisiana and Dr. Melinda Bartley of Southern University, noted that, across the country, ". . .the dropout rate is higher among Hispanics, blacks, and economically and educationally disadvantaged youth." The National Center for Education Statistics, in a 1989 report entitled **Dropout Rates in the United States: 1988**, reviewed racial/ethnic issues and graduation statistics and noted that a significant variable for high school completion is where a student lives, not necessarily whether the student is black or white. Nationally, whites in large metropolitan areas are as likely to leave before graduating as blacks. On the other hand, Hispanic graduation rates are low regardless of where the students live. More than 92% of U.S. Hispanics live in urban areas, but Hispanic rates for graduation are low even if the students live in suburban or rural areas. An October, 1990, publication of the National Council of La Raza highlights the fact that, "Not only are Hispanic high school completion rates lower than for other groups, but also, because Hispanics leave school at earlier ages, they complete fewer years of school than other dropouts."

In a previous report, the Research Institute noted that increasing numbers of students in some larger districts, particularly Hispanics, are dropping out even before entering high school. With this in mind, the Research Institute staff opted to compare 7th grade enrollment in 1984-85 to the graduation totals for the same class in 1990 (Table 1). Excluding Atlantic City, where students from some surrounding elementary districts go to high school, in seven of these urban districts the ratio of 1984-85 7th grade enrollment to 1990 graduates was higher than 2:1. In Camden, Trenton, and Paterson, the ratio of 1984-85 7th graders to 1990 graduates was 3:1. In contrast, Clifton had a 7th grade enrollment in 1984-85 of 526 and graduated 489 in 1990. Montclair enrolled 351 students in the 7th grade in 1984-85 and graduated 334 in 1990. Apart from the 15 urban districts, some districts even add students along the way. Cherry Hill, for example, enrolled 846 7th graders in 1984-85 and had 886 graduates in the class of 1990.

Some schools in New Jersey urban districts have small increases in 9th grade enrollment probably due to parochial school students entering public high schools and/or 9th grade retention, a common practice in many of these districts. In such circumstances, where there is an increase in enrollment in 9th grade, the Research Institute's utilization in this report of graduation totals compared to 7th

TABLE 4

Survival to Graduation for Racial/Ethnic Groups, By District

		7th Grade 1984-85		Graduates 1990			
					%		%
		Male	Female	Male	Survival	Female	Survival
Camden	White	26	32	5	19%	2	6%
	Black	487	413	167	34	205	50
	Hispanic	236	230	57	24	68	30
	Total	**749**	**675**	**229**	**31**	**275**	**41**
Newark	White	220	183	129	59	132	72
	Black	1,318	1,304	539	41	726	56
	Hispanic	563	475	195	35	175	37
	Total	**2,101**	**1,962**	**863**	**41**	**1,033**	**53**
Irvington	White	30	31	12	40	9	29
	Black	288	308	116	40	156	51
	Hispanic	51	52	17	33	27	52
	Total	**369**	**391**	**145**	**39**	**192**	**49**
Jersey City	White	199	203	72	36	67	33
	Black	481	530	225	47	282	53
	Hispanic	381	379	159	42	157	41
	Asian/Pacific Islander	85	71	63	74	78	110
	Total	**1,146**	**1,183**	**519**	**45**	**584**	**49**
Passaic	White	38	32	27	71	15	47
	Black	100	93	46	46	48	52
	Hispanic	198	199	76	38	114	57
	Asian/Pacific Islander	23	18	34	148	22	122
	Total	**359**	**342**	**183**	**51**	**199**	**58**

Source: Camden, Newark, Irvington, Jersey City, and Passaic "Consolidated Enrollment Report: Current School Enrollment Data" as of September 30, 1989, and September 30, 1984 (on microfilm). N.J. Department of Education, "New Jersey Public Schools Followup Report," June, 1990. Calculations by Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey.

grade enrollments underrepresents dropout frequency. Also, if class enrollment totals and district graduation totals are adjusted to include special education (self-contained classrooms) students and county vocational education students, the dropout picture looks even worse. A counter trend, although typically not of major significance, is family out migration from these districts.

In order to analyze the problem in greater detail, the Research Institute selected five districts (Table 4) from the group of 15 to show the dramatic drop in survival from grade 7 to graduation by gender and racial/ethnic group. Newark, Jersey City, and Camden were selected because they are among the largest districts in the state. Passaic was included because there is an Asian population of significant size, and Irvington was chosen because of the dramatic change in its racial/ethnic population in the last 12 years. (In Irvington, in 1977-78, the percentage of white enrollment was 40%; black, 48%; and Hispanic, 11%. By 1989-90, the Irvington school district had an enrollment which was 4% white, 81% black, and 14% Hispanic.) As Table 4 illustrates, the white enrollment in Camden and Irvington becomes almost negligible by graduation. A combination of family mobility, dropping out, or transferring to private schools are the plausible reasons for the decreasing white enrollment. Asian/Pacific Islander enrollments as well as the number of graduates from this ethnic group are increasing in Passaic and Jersey City. Unfortunately, the fluctuations and low enrollments of both whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders in these districts make any conclusive analysis of these students' completion rates impossible.

Since most of the five districts have significant enrollment of black and Hispanic students, evidence of declining numbers is more conclusive. June, 1990, Hispanic male graduates from the Camden school system equalled only 24% of the number of Hispanic males enrolled in the 7th

grade in the district in the fall of 1984. The other four districts also had serious problems in keeping Hispanic males in school; in fact, for the five districts, the ratio of Hispanic male 7th graders in 1984 to Hispanic male graduates in 1990 was 3:1. In these districts, black students appear to have higher graduation rates than Hispanics. Among the black and Hispanic student populations in the five districts, females tend to graduate more frequently than males.

Recommendations

1. New Jersey school districts must emphasize precise data reporting.

Analyzing the figures supplied by school districts to the Department of Education is extremely difficult, because discrepancies abound. In the course of this project, the Research Institute found multiple examples of school district data reporting that contained obvious imprecisions. For example, Passaic submitted data to the New Jersey Department of Education in October, 1989, for its "Consolidated Enrollment Report" showing a 12th grade enrollment on September 29, 1989, of 321 students. However, the district reported to the Department of Education at a later date for the "New Jersey Public School Follow-up Report" that it graduated 382 students in June, 1990. The explanation from the district was that students who went to summer school to make up needed credits were, on paper, still officially enrolled in the 11th grade because the computer count had not been "rolled over." Newark's University High School also recorded more graduates than 12th graders for that year. This high school included special education students in the graduation totals; in previous years, these special education graduates were recorded in the totals of their local neighborhood high schools. The program offered to these special education students is located in the University High School building but does not reflect the program offered to other students accepted to this magnet school.

2. The New Jersey Department of Education and the legislature need to evaluate dropout data collected for the 1990-91 school year.

The Research Institute opted to use graduation rates to reflect the magnitude of the dropout situation only because of the poor data quality of official dropout statistics. Hopefully, the problem has been eliminated with the implementation of the new system of dropout reporting (P.L. 1989, Chapter 214) mandated to begin during the 1990-91 school year. The new dropout reporting forms require the identification by name of students who leave school for any reason. Dropout data should now reflect the levels noted by studying enrollment changes through graduation. The Department of Education must place a high priority on establishing a timetable and an analytical system for reviewing the data collected pursuant to Chapter 214.

The implementation of these three ideas will help to identify students who are at-risk of dropping out and help to target appropriate programs.

3. The Department of Education should require that the age of a student be recorded on dropout reporting forms.

New Jersey dropout data will still remain somewhat primitive, even with the new law, due to the lack of some basic information. One significant fact necessary to provide a thorough analysis is the age of the dropout. There is a very big difference between a 16 year old who drops out of school in the 11th grade and a 16 year old who drops out in the 7th or 8th grade. The likelihood of the 11th grader returning to school and ultimately receiving a diploma or its equivalent is much higher than for the student who has never even reached high school, as documented by the National Center for Education Statistics. In order to evaluate the dropout situation more completely, it is important to know at what age a student dropped out of school. All student records contain the age of the student. Why not transfer it to the dropout form? Providing this additional fact could put into perspective the number of urban students who are older than the average age for their class. Retention in grade is the major reason for this age disparity and is a common occurrence in some of the districts studied. The practice of retention in grade is now highly criticized by leading educators as a potential dropout cause and as an expensive, unsuccessful alternative to programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk students. The Aspira Institute of Policy Research's "Five Cities High School Dropout Study" concludes that "for Hispanic students grade retention is a common practice which has ominous consequences later."

4. The School-Based Youth Services Program should continue its efforts to provide a full scale evaluation to state government officials in terms of the program's effectiveness in keeping students in school. If the program is determined to be successful in this regard, it should be expanded to more schools and all grade levels.

The School-Based Youth Services Program has received national recognition for making some major inroads toward solving problems

which prevent some children from learning. In 1988, New Jersey's Department of Human Services, in cooperation with local school districts, established SBYSP in, or linked to, schools at 29 sites around the state. This program offers a comprehensive range of services including employment counseling, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, family crisis counseling, academic counseling, primary and preventive health services, recreation, and referrals for health and social services. Links between providers were found to offer the most effective means for reaching and treating large numbers of adolescents on a regular basis. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development in its major 1989 education report, **Turning Points: Preparing America's Youth for the 21st Century**, gave special recognition to this project. **Education Week**, a national newspaper, observed that experts consider the New Jersey School-Based Youth Services Program "the nation's most comprehensive statewide effort to coordinate services for at-risk high school students." Other national groups, for example, the Education and Human Services Consortium (which includes such organizations as the National Governors' Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the Child Welfare League of America), have also cited SBYSP as an example of an exemplary program for assisting young people to succeed in school. The consortium's recent and widely heralded publication, **What It Takes**, gave the New Jersey SBYSP a strong endorsement and commented that this "is an example of a gubernatorial initiative that has survived a change in leadership—even party—and is moving along well." The thrust of the impressive **What It Takes** report is that interagency partnerships should be structured to connect children and families with comprehensive social services, as "the current social welfare system divides the problems of children and families into rigid and distinct categories that fail to reflect their interrelated causes and solutions." The legislature authorized $6 million in unrestricted funds from the Department of Human Services' overall operating budget to create the SBYSP. Since then, the Florio Administration has added another $500,000 which was used to establish seven elementary and middle grade demonstration sites. Although it may be too early to say that such services prevented a specified number of students from dropping out, initial evaluations have been able to show increasing student participation and positive student response. Last month, SBYSP was named a finalist in a $100,000 innovation grant competition sponsored by the Ford Foundation and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. This is one outstanding example of a New Jersey program already in place, just waiting to be expanded to more schools at all grade levels.

Interagency partnerships should be constructed to connect children and families with comprehensive social services.

5. School principals, both elementary and secondary, should seriously consider organizing mentor programs.

"This is an intervention that works!" comments Daniel W. Merenda, Executive Director of the National Association of Partners in Education. His words are echoed by those education professionals, business people, and community sponsors who have been involved in the development of programs such as mentoring.

The growth of mentor/counseling programs for young at-risk students through community based organizations and through school/business partnerships can be a positive force toward dropout prevention. Mentors make a sustained personal commitment to a young person needing the guidance, moral support, and approval of a warm-hearted adult. Research on mentor programs has found that many at-risk children do not have the networks of human resources that offer them extra attention, affection, and guidance, the traditional roles for grandparents, neighbors, community or church organizations. Guidance counselors are often overburdened, unable to extend the needed support to children whose troubled families are isolated from the larger community. Young males, as well as females, have benefitted from the one-on-one relationship of mentorship. As with most student intervention programs, Mr. Merenda's enthusiasm for mentorships is tempered with cautious optimism. He observes that successful programs need the support of the principal, teachers, and guidance counselors. "All participants must buy into such a program," he says, "and clear goals and objectives must be established."

In New Jersey, Aspira, NAACP, the Urban League, and people employed by corporations such as Mutual Benefit Life and New Jersey Bell have worked closely with young at-risk students to encourage them to stay in school. AT&T has almost 200 volunteers serving as mentors through programs conducted by the School-Based Youth Services Program discussed in recommendation number 4. Dr. Elsa Nuñez-Wormack, the author of the Newark segment of the Aspira "Five Cities" research project, commented that most of the Hispanic boys she interviewed from the Broadway Middle School had no father at home. The boys in Aspira programs who worked with mentors and counselors talked freely with those adults about academic problems, per-

sonal problems, and goals for their future. These one-on-one, male-to-male, relationships were a positive force in the students' lives and an important deterrent to dropping out of school. Although the ideal was to pair Hispanic adult males with Hispanic students, she felt that, for high school students, the influence of a male mentor was the more crucial element than the mentor's ethnicity in the provision of support. Another ongoing Aspira program paired Hispanic high school students with Hispanic middle school students. In this case, the similarity of backgrounds proved essential to a successful relationship; for example, a male Puerto Rican Barringer High School student was paired with a male Puerto Rican Broadway Middle School student (Barringer is the receiving high school for Broadway Middle School students).

Conclusion

The Research Institute recognizes that these five recommendations are not a comprehensive strategy for keeping students in school. The first three recommendations are offered in the hope that better data on the dropout problem will ultimately lead to a better understanding of possible solutions. The implementation of these three ideas will help to identify students who are at risk of dropping out in the future and help to target appropriate programs. The final two recommendations discuss programs of promise. None of these recommendations address classroom issues, which are best discussed by those with current direct involvement, such as parents, teachers, and administrators. The third, and final, Research Institute dropout report will offer additional recommendations regarding the importance of extracurricular activities in keeping students in school.

— Joan M. Ponessa

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